REMARKS

The Examiner rejected claims 1-5 and 8-13 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Izawa (United States patent No. 5,665,179) in view of Keil (U.S. Patent No. 6,024,893). The Examiner also rejected Claims 1 and 3-15 under 35 USC §103(a) as being obvious over Izawa in view of the article "Modern Surface Treatments." Izawa discloses a method of making a steel coil. The method includes the step of gas nitriding the steel coil to produce a nitriding surface. Keil discloses a method of controlling a nitriding furnace by controlling the nitriding potential in the furnace. "Modern Surface Treatments" discloses using the Nitreg process to regulate the nitriding potential. The Examiner states it would be obvious to regulate the nitriding potential in the method of making of steel coil disclosed in Izawa, and therefore Applicant's claims are obvious.

It would not be obvious to regulate the nitriding potential in the method of making a steel coil disclosed in Izawa. Izawa contains no suggestion to regulate the nitriding potential. Izawa discloses a method of producing a coil spring including numerous steps. One of the many steps is nitriding the steel coil to form a nitriding surface on the surface of the coil. However, there is no suggestion in Izawa to regulate the nitriding potential of a nitriding atmosphere during the step of nitriding the surface of the coil spring. There is also no suggestion in either Keil or the "Modern Surface Treatments" publication to employ regulate the nitriding potential of a nitriding atmosphere to harden the surface of a steel coil as claimed by Applicant.

Additionally, Applicant's are not obvious because the claims overcome many problems of the prior art by regulating the nitriding potential. As disclosed in Applicant's specification in paragraphs 4 and 21, a drawback to the prior art nitriding process is that a white compound layer is formed on the steel surface of an object that is nitrided. The white compound layer is commonly removed by a finishing step. By regulating the nitriding potential of a nitriding atmosphere while hardening a steel coil, Applicant's claims control or eliminate the white compound layer on the steel coil. Therefore, the additional finishing step is not required. Applicant is claiming an improved method of hardening a steel spring coil without the drawbacks of the prior art. There is no suggestion in any of the references to regulate a nitriding potential of a nitriding atmosphere in a method of surface hardening a coil spring. The rejection is improper, and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Thus, claims 1-23 are in condition for allowance. The Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482, in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds, P.C., $54.00 for three additional dependent claims. No additional fees are seen to be required. If any additional fees are due, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482, in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds, P.C., for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment. Therefore, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAIL

I hereby certify that the enclosed Response is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Mail Stop Non-Fee Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria VA 22313-1450 on this 5th day of May 2003.

Karin Butchko

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